

San Juan Bautista

State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at (831) 623-4526. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P. O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

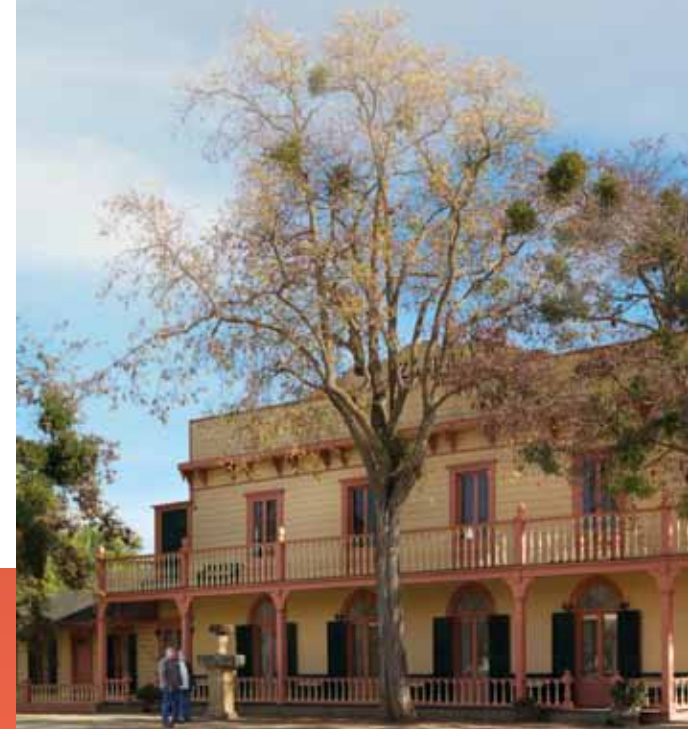
711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

Discover the many states of California.™

San Juan Bautista State Historic Park
Second Street
at Washington & Mariposa
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(831) 623-4526

*San Juan Bautista
echoed with the ring
of the blacksmith's
anvil and the whinnies
of stagecoach horses
carrying passengers
from all over the world.*



I **magine a**
place where you
can step back
into history and
walk the paths of
Native Californians,
Spanish padres,
Mexican

government
officials, European
immigrants, miners
and Victorian ladies all in one place.

Mission San Juan Bautista, California's
fifteenth mission, was built in the southern
portion of the San Juan Valley, at the
foot of low hills along the San Andreas
earthquake fault line. Although the mission
played a central role in San Juan Bautista's
development, it is not part of the state park.

San Juan Bautista State Historic Park
encompasses historic buildings, gardens and
picnic areas that offer visitors the opportunity
to experience life as it was in early California
between 1859 and 1890.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

For thousands of years, this area was
originally populated by the Mutsun people,
who lived in the basin surrounding the Pajaro
River. The region they called *Popeloutchom*
is now called the San Juan Valley.

Each Mutsun village had dome-shaped
tule homes (*ruk*), granaries, a sweat house
and outlying camps. A Mutsun village called
Trahtrahk (place of many springs) stood on
the site of present-day San Juan Bautista.



Travelers at the Plaza Hotel, ca. 1875

Colonization

On February 24,
1797, Father Fermin
Lasuén, Franciscan
successor to Father
Junípero Serra,
founded Mission
San Juan Bautista.
Named after Saint
John the Baptist, the
mission was one of

21 built to convert local Native Americans
to the Spanish way of life, subject them to
Spanish civil law, and teach them to run a
pueblo, or self-sufficient community.

Father Lasuén's padres used Mutsun labor
and recruited Yokuts and Miwok people
from as far away as the Sierra foothills.
The Franciscan fathers called the native
people "neophytes" after their conversion
to Catholicism. As the mission's labor force,
the native people made adobe bricks,
constructed buildings, raised crops and
cared for livestock. The mission's olives,
wheat, wool, hides and tallow supplied the
growing colony.

Thousands of the mission's neophytes
were eventually buried in the church
cemetery. The remaining few Mutsun
integrated with Yokuts and Miwok
to become the present-day Amah
Mutsun Tribal Band.

Following Mexico's independence
from Spain in 1821, the missions
were secularized—converted from
church property to private property.
Mexico's civil administrator for the

region, José Tibúrcio Castro, oversaw the
seizure and sale of mission property.

Park Buildings

Castro/Breen Adobe—José Tibúrcio Castro
commissioned this adobe home in 1838
for his son, Mexican General José Antonio
Castro. General Castro was appointed
commander of the Monterey District of Alta
California in 1834 and acted as governor
until 1836. In 1846 western pathfinder John
C. Frémont and frontier legend Kit Carson
planted the first U.S. flag over California on
Gavilan Peak (now Fremont Peak), above the
San Juan Valley. General Castro demanded
that Frémont's group leave Mexico's
territory; they left after three
tense days.

The adobe was completed in 1841, but
General Castro's duties elsewhere kept him
away from his new home. In 1848, Patrick
and Margaret Breen arrived penniless in San
Juan with their seven children. The entire
family had survived 111 days in the Sierra
Nevada snow as members of the Donner
party of 1846. A sympathetic General Castro
allowed the Breens to live in his home until
they could afford to buy it.

Sixteen-year-old son John Breen set
off for the gold fields in 1848, soon
returning with over \$10,000 in gold
dust. The Breen family used John's
profits to purchase the adobe from
the Castros, as well as 400 acres
of prime farmland. The Breens
owned the adobe until 1933, when it
became part of the State Park System.



*General José
Antonio Castro*



Castro/Breen courtyard



Zanetta House parlor



Plaza stable



Preparing bread for the horno

Plaza Hotel—The hotel, now a museum and park entrance point, was a one-story adobe built in 1814 in the Spanish colonial style. The building first served as barracks for the Spanish soldiers who protected the mission.

In 1856 Italian immigrant Angelo Zanetta leased the building and added a redwood second story; the building then became the Plaza Hotel. The hotel opened in January 1859, attracting patrons for both its fine French and Italian cuisine and its saloon. Travelers from around the world were guests at the hotel.

Plaza Hall/Zanetta House—Angelo Zanetta remodeled the hall on the site of an earlier mission building; he later moved in with his family. Many elegant events were held in the grand ballroom upstairs. Period furnishings are on display, and one child's room in the exhibit features 1800s-era toys.

Plaza/Courtyard—Spanish pueblos were usually built around a central courtyard or plaza that was used for bullfights, bearfights, cockfights, parades and social gatherings. Early residents baked bread in igloo-shaped outdoor ovens called *hornos*, and dried cowhides in the plaza. The courtyard behind the Castro/Breen Adobe has a gristmill, an *horno*, and a tallow display.

Plaza Stable, Blacksmith Shop—Horses pulled the busy stagecoach and wagon traffic through San Juan Bautista when it was a transportation hub on El Camino Real between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Up to eleven stages arrived and departed daily. Eventually, trains replaced stagecoaches; when the railroad line bypassed the town for Hollister in 1876, San Juan Bautista declined. Exhibits in the stable and blacksmith shop area include stages, wagons, carriages and fire wagon.

Several buildings at San Juan Bautista SHP today stand on the sites of or incorporate earlier mission structures, probably built by native people. The stone foundations of two narrow adobe row houses that once housed neophyte families lie hidden underground in the Taix lot south of the park headquarters. The original buildings are no longer visible, but the stories of their inhabitants are preserved in the archaeological deposits that remain.

NATURAL HISTORY

Due to the town's location along the San Andreas fault, San Juan Bautista's buildings have sustained severe earthquake damage. Up to six quakes per day shook the town for 19 straight days in 1800. The 1906 earthquake

also cracked many of the town buildings.

The San Andreas fault is located at the end of the plaza east of the hotel. At the top of the hill near a statue, visitors can stand on the edge of the Pacific tectonic plate. The fault scarp formation, where the earth shifted between the Pacific and the North American tectonic plates, can be seen at the base of the hill.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Living History Days—On the first Saturday of each month, costumed docents reenact daily life in California history, such as the stagecoach era and the hotel's heyday. A summer celebration called Early Days features costumed early California residents and mountain men, blacksmithing demonstrations, sarsaparilla tasting and other events.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The Castro/Breen Adobe, the first floor of the Plaza Hotel/Museum Store, the gardens and the restrooms are accessible. A ramped entry allows access to the stables, the blacksmith shop, and the Plaza Hall/Zanetta House. Assisted listening devices are also available. Call the park staff in advance at (831) 623-4526 to arrange access. For updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- San Juan Bautista's climate can be either foggy or very hot in spring and summer; it is often rainy and cool in winter.
- All features of the park are protected by law and must be not be disturbed.
- Pets are not allowed in park buildings, except for service animals on leash.
- The park is open for day-use only. Call the park at (831) 623-4526 or visit www.parks.ca.gov/sjbshp

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Fremont Peak State Park (and Observatory), Off Highway 156, 11 miles south of San Juan Bautista on San Juan Canyon Road (831) 623-4255
- Henry W. Coe State Park, 9000 E. Dunne Ave., Morgan Hill (408) 779-2728
- Monterey State Historic Park, 20 Custom House Plaza, near Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey (831) 649-7118



This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact Plaza History Association, P.O. Box 813, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
www.plazahistory.org

